



# BUFFALOBERRY PATCH

By GREG FREEMAN, DEPARTMENT NEWS EDITOR

## Season Yields Two Cats – So Far

Mountain lions shot in mid-November in western North Dakota were the first two cats taken during the state's first experimental season.

A mountain lion was shot November 16 by a companion of a deer hunter northwest of Grassy Butte. The second cat was shot November 17 by a hunter in the Killdeer area.

The first lion was a female, approximately 2 1/2-3 years of age, and weighed 92 pounds. The second lion was a young male, approximately 1 1/2-2 years of age, and weighed 99 pounds.

Fresh mountain lion tracks in the Killdeer Mountains were also confirmed in late November by a North Dakota Game and Fish Department game warden.

The experimental season started in early September and runs through March 12, 2006, or until a season quota of five cats has been met. Any mountain lion taken must be reported to the Game and Fish Department within 12 hours and the entire animal must be submitted for analysis.



MIKE ANDERSON

*Dorothy Fecske, Department furbearer/disease biologist, and Brent Ternes, Department wildlife technician, gather information on a mountain lion shot in the Killdeer area.*

## Ice Safety Tips

Anglers and trappers are urged to be aware of ice conditions before venturing out on frozen waters.

"Before going out onto a frozen lake, pond or river, it's important to take safety precautions to reduce the risk of falling through the ice," said Nancy Boldt, North Dakota Game and Fish Department boat and water safety coordinator. "Knowing how to judge ice conditions will also help in making a more informed decision."

Boldt cautions recreationists to be aware of snow-covered ice. Snow insulates ice, inhibiting solid ice formation, and makes it difficult to check thickness. Snow also hides cracked, weak and open water areas. "Stay away from cracks, pressure ridges, slushy or darker areas that signify thinner ice, and ice that forms around partially submerged objects, such as trees, brush, embankments or structures," she said.

Ice thickness, Boldt said, can vary significantly within a few inches. "Ice shouldn't be judged strictly by appearance," she said. Daily changes in temperature causes ice to expand and contract, which affects its strength. "It is always good to talk to people at local bait shops, or other anglers, if you are not familiar with a lake," Boldt said.



CHRIS GRONDAHL

*This staged photograph shows how an ice angler can use ice picks or screwdrivers to get out of the water in case of an accidental breakthrough.*

The Game and Fish Department recommends the following minimums for travel on clear-blue lake ice formed under ideal conditions. However, early in the winter Boldt advises doubling these figures to be safe: four inches for a group of people walking single file; six inches for a snowmobile or all-terrain vehicle; 8-12 inches for an automobile; and 12-15 inches for a pickup/truck.

Boldt also suggests wearing a personal flotation device and carrying a cell phone while on the ice. Also, an ice chisel should be used to check ice thickness while moving around, and ice picks or a set of screwdrivers should be carried to pull yourself back on the ice in case you fall through.

If someone falls through the ice, act quickly by calling 911. Attempt to reach the victim with a long pole, board, rope, blanket or snowmobile suit. If that isn't possible, throw the victim a life jacket, empty water jug or other buoyant object. Go to the victim as the last resort. Should this be necessary, a human chain, in which rescuers lie on the ice with each person grasping the feet of the person in front, is an effective technique.

Treat a hypothermia victim by removing wet clothing and replacing with dry clothing. An effective treatment is to place the victim in a sleeping bag, if available, with another person. Immediately transport the victim to a hospital.

## Mule Deer Trend Remains Positive

North Dakota's mule deer population remains in good shape, according to Bruce Stillings, big game biologist for the state Game and Fish Department, Dickinson.

Based on aerial observations during the fall reproduction survey, two primary indicators – ratio of fawns-per-doe, and bucks-per-doe – were at or above long-term averages, Stillings said. The fawn-per-doe ratio was .93 fawns per doe, and the buck-to-doe ratio was .42 bucks per doe.

Observers, who accompanied pilots in fixed-wing planes, counted 2,203 mule deer during the October 2005 survey, which encompassed 22 study areas and 278 square miles in western North Dakota.

"Our surveys continue to indicate a population with stable recruitment and good numbers of adult bucks," Stillings said. "Relatively mild winters and sound management decisions have the badlands mule deer population moving in the right direction."



## Identification Required on Unoccupied Fish Houses

Anglers are reminded that unoccupied fish houses left on the ice must be identifiable.

The owner's name, and either address or telephone number, must be displayed on the outside with letters or numbers of at least three inches high. Any unoccupied fish house left on the ice without having proper identification may be removed or destroyed, and the owner could be cited for a class 2 noncriminal offense, according to Robert Timian, enforcement chief for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department.

"Most people know that identification is required," Timian said, "but some who are using houses for the first time aren't aware of the regulation."

A number of years ago, state lawmakers repealed the law requiring licensing of fish houses in North Dakota. Because of that, Timian said, some people think no identification is necessary. "We see a few houses each year that aren't identified and the owner is nowhere around," he said. "Citations are issued to the owner when unoccupied fish houses are left on the ice."

## WEB ADDRESS CHANGE

The address for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's website has changed.

The Department's old web address of [discovernd.com/gnf](http://discovernd.com/gnf) has been changed to an easier-to-remember

**[gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov)**.

## NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS Live!

With Radio Host Doug Leier, Game and Fish Outreach Biologist

**Saturdays at 11 a.m.** (10 a.m. mountain time)

on the following North Dakota Clear Channel radio network stations:

KFGO-AM 790, Fargo

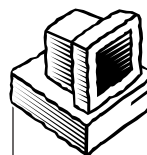
KKXL-AM 1440, Grand Forks • KCJB-AM 910, Minot

KLTC-AM 1460, Dickinson • KFYR-AM 550, Bismarck

(Tape delay from previous week:

KFAN-AM 1130, Twin Cities, Saturdays at 5 a.m.)

Join Doug and guests for news and conversation that embraces everyone with an interest in North Dakota's Outdoors.



## INSTANT LICENSING

Online at **[gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov)**

Over the phone at **800-406-6409**

Most types of Game and Fish licenses and applications are now available both online at the Department's website, or over the phone. Online license purchases have no surcharge, while instant licensing over the phone carries a service charge of \$4 for transactions of \$70 or less, and \$10 if the cost is more than \$70.





## WARDEN STORIES

### *Animal Encounters*

By Gary Rankin



Warden Gary Rankin

One of the rewards of being a game warden is contact with an array of wildlife.

We see a variety of common game taken by hunters, with an occasional oddity such as a black duck.

Injured and sick animals are a steady source of business. Deer with broken legs, moose with parasites, or hawks with broken wings are all sad cases. Most of these we are not able to help and they have to be put down. This is one of the *worst* parts of a warden's job.

Sometimes we investigate reports of unusual or rare animals. In northeastern North Dakota that has included confirmed sightings of bears, mountain lions, otters, fishers, grey foxes and flying squirrels.

Dead animals also require attention. Some are picked up and checked for disease. Some are victims of criminal activity. Some are evidence of an environmental problem.

With that in mind, one day during March 2004 I headed toward northeastern Grand Forks County to check out a report of a dead bald eagle beneath a power line.

Over time, improperly constructed power lines have proven to be a hazard to raptors. Power companies have learned how to arrange their wires to avoid electrocuting birds of prey, but it still occasionally happens. The U.S. Fish and

Wildlife Service keeps records of these incidents to make sure there isn't a problem over a certain section of line.

It is also important to retrieve dead eagles. The Fish and Wildlife Service gives the birds to members of Indian tribes, who use the feathers for traditional ceremonies and costumes.

As I approached the reported spot, I did indeed see a bird on the ground beneath the power lines, orange feet extended skyward as the pathetic creature reposed on its back. From a distance, the bird's gray shade didn't look quite right for an eagle, and those skyward feet seemed a little colorful.

After a short walk, a close inspection revealed a bird of somewhat less nobility than an eagle. A chicken, someone's common barnyard fowl, was lying there in the snow.

By its proximity to the road, my guess is that someone in the neighborhood, disgusted with a dead chicken in his yard, gave the hen a ride and tossed her to a resting place beneath the power line, where a well-meaning passerby noticed it and phoned in a report.

I left the chicken in peace. The power company would not have to be concerned about its line design, and I had further reason to never be totally surprised by what I find on my next critter call.

**GARY RANKIN** is a district game warden stationed at Larimore.



## GAME & FISH STAFF NOTES

### Weigel Named Game and Fish Employee of the Year

Jerry Weigel, fisheries production and development supervisor, received the Director's Award for 2005 during the Department's annual winter meeting.

Dean

Hildebrand, Game and Fish Department director, said Weigel has shown extraordinary energy and competency since he was first hired in 1986.

A Linton native and graduate of the University of North Dakota, Weigel has shown a great ability to coordinate with federal fish hatcheries to achieve increased production demands on a statewide level, Hildebrand said. "He coordinates our fish production issues with the hatcheries, and works fish trades with hatchery coordinators from other states," Hildebrand said. "He also puts in hundreds of hours hauling fish."

In addition to his fish production and development obligations, Weigel coordinates the computer demands for the fisheries division. "He has written the database program for stocking and netting records," Hildebrand said. "He has also set up all division computers across the state, and has been working with global information systems and how that technology will enhance the fisheries division."





## STAFF AWARDS

### Lundstrom Named Wildlife Officer of the Year

Jackie Lundstrom, district game warden, Bismarck, is the state's 2005 Wildlife Officer of the Year. Lundstrom was honored recently by the Shikar-Safari Club



International, a private conservation organization that annually recognizes outstanding wildlife officers in each state.

In a nomination letter sent to Shikar-Safari, chief warden Robert Timian noted Lundstrom's district in central North Dakota is one of the busiest and most populated areas in the state. "Warden Lundstrom's patrol duties include waterfowl, upland game, big game and fishing activities, and enforcement of a number of public lands owned or managed by the Game and Fish Department," he said. "These public areas in her district receive heavy use, most of which is not related to hunting or fishing. The Department has put a high emphasis on preventing illegal activity in this area, and warden Lundstrom has played a significant role in this effort."

Lundstrom's district also includes a section of the Missouri River, one of the most heavily used waterways in the state. "She spends many hours monitoring boat traffic on the river, and has issued numerous citations for prohibited operations of personal watercraft and other general boat safety violations," Timian said.

In addition, Lundstrom is active in hunter and boat safety education, Timian said, and takes advantage of all public educational opportunities. "Her organizational skills, her dedication to natural resource enforcement and her abilities to serve the public make her a valuable asset to the North Dakota Game and Fish Department," he said.

Lundstrom is a Devils Lake native, and graduate of North Dakota State University.

### Game and Fish Recognizes Employee Efforts

North Dakota Game and Fish Department Director Dean Hildebrand recently honored a number of employees with performance-based awards at the Game and Fish Department's annual winter staff meeting. Here's a look:

#### **Meritorious Service**

**Award** – Mike McKenna, conservation and communications division chief, Bismarck. This award was presented to McKenna for his efforts in revitalizing and energizing the Department's planning process. "Mike's creative and unique approach to the planning process has been necessary and effective," Hildebrand said. "Planning is very difficult, and the Department is better off because of his efforts. He has brought a more condensed and efficient approach to planning, and the completion of the strategic, operational and evaluative phases will serve as the Department's template for the future."



Mike McKenna

#### **Special Projects**

**Award** – Dan Halstead, wildlife resource management supervisor, Riverdale. This award is given to a staff member for completing a new project, which is on its way to being highly successful. Halstead was recognized for his work in completing the Mallard Island Wetland Development Project. "Dan quietly and independently worked to secure the necessary funding, and led the coordination effort necessary to complete the project," Hildebrand said. "Through his steady and confident approach, he managed to assemble a large and diverse partnership that resulted in full funding and a functional project. Because of this, Mallard Island will significantly add to waterfowl production in North Dakota."



Dan Halstead

**Innovations Award** – The fisheries division field staff was presented with this award, recognizing staff for implementing a process to improve Department goals and objectives. "Our fisheries division initiated a project to determine how successful our walleye stocking program has been, and where we likely need to put further resources to improve either stocking success or aquatic habitat," Hildebrand said. "Every fingerling walleye stocked in the state is marked with a common antibiotic. During fall sampling, young-of-the-year walleye are gathered, sent to a lab and analyzed to determine the proportion of marked fish to unmarked fish. This determines the success of our stocking efforts and natural reproduction. Our fisheries field staff put in an extraordinary amount of work and hours to take proper care of fish prior to stocking, and while gathering young-of-the-year."

#### **Solid Foundation**

**Award** – Janel Kolar, administrative assistant, Dickinson. This award is presented to an employee or group of individuals who demonstrate exemplary work in the administrative, technical or support field. According to Hildebrand, Kolar has developed and maintained statewide computer programs for enforcement, wildlife and fisheries divisions. "In addition to the number of tasks she performs as the administrative assistant at the Dickinson office, Janel has been instrumental in streamlining and updating computer programs," Hildebrand said. "She leads office staff through the multitude of software updates with expertise and patience. She offers great insight and an unparalleled interest in her work."



Janel Kolar

### **Public Outreach**

**Award** – Dorothy Fecske, furbearer and wildlife disease biologist, Bismarck. This award is presented to an employee for showing a significant effort, ability, or accomplishment in interacting with the public while promoting the Department's programs. Fecske was noted for her efforts in working with the public and media on issues related to mountain lion management. "Within the first two weeks of her employment with the Department, Dorothy was thrust into the spotlight resulting from an expanding number of issues related to mountain lions," Hildebrand said. "These issues were highly charged, controversial and difficult. Dorothy's positive attitude, exceptional skill and knowledge of the issue have drawn accolades from the public, other agencies and Department staff."



*Dorothy Fecske*

**Boating Officer Award** – James Myhre, district game warden, Steele, received the 2005 National Association of State Boating Law Administrators Officer of the Year Award for North Dakota. Each state in NASBLA selects a person for a national award. Myhre was recognized for his outstanding public service, and his professionalism and personal commitment to promoting safe and enjoyable recreational boating, according to Nancy Boldt, boat and water safety coordinator. "Warden Myhre's district includes some of the most congested waters of the state, and his presence has done much to create a safer environment for boaters," Boldt said. "He is active in boating education in the community, has worked with other law enforcement agencies to encourage their officers to become involved with boating enforcement, and has been instrumental in forming a local sportsmen's organization."

### **Lonetree Staff Receives Conservation Award**

North Dakota Game and Fish Department staff at Lonetree Wildlife Management Area received the 2005 Achievement Award from the Sheridan County Soil Conservation District.

The staff was recognized for their conservation efforts at Lonetree WMA, a 33,000-acre parcel located in Sheridan and Wells counties in central North Dakota.

Lonetree WMA offers native prairie remnants, including thriving purple coneflower, public use areas, sharp-tailed grouse dancing grounds, 32 miles of North Country Trail available for hiking, fishing area, three primitive campgrounds, and numerous wildlife species available for viewing and photography.

Wildlife management areas are managed by the Game and Fish Department and are open for public hunting, fishing and trapping.



## **NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS**

ON TELEVISION

### **Your Weekly Window on the WILD**

Bismarck	KFYR	Tuesday	10 pm
Bismarck	KXMB	Sunday	10 pm
Bismarck	CATV	Saturday	Noon
Dickinson	KQCD	Tuesday	*9 pm
Dickinson	KXMA	Sunday	*9 pm
Fargo	KVRR	Sunday	9 pm
Grand Forks	WDAZ	Wednesday	5 pm
Minot	KMOT	Tuesday	10 pm
Minot	KXMC	Monday	Noon
Williston	KUMV	Tuesday	10 pm
Williston	KXMD	Monday	Noon

*\*Mountain time*